

REMARKS

The present Preliminary Amendment is submitted with the Continuation Application enclosed herewith. The Continuation Application is based on and claims the priority of patent application number 09/973,442, filed October 9, 2001, which was based on and claimed the priority of provisional application number 60/242,276, filed October 20, 2000 and provisional application number 60/263,941, filed January 24, 2001. The amendments contained in this Preliminary Amendment should be considered prior to calculating the filing fee.

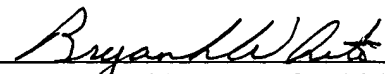
By this Preliminary Amendment, claims 1, 3, 30-32, 34-35, 39, 41 and 43-49 have been amended, and claims 18-29, 33, 36-38, 40 and 42 have been canceled without prejudice. Claims 1-17, 30-32, 34-35, 39, 41 and 43-49 remain pending in this Continuation Application.

All claim amendments are fully supported throughout the specification and figures. For example, the Examiner's attention is directed to pages 11, 13, 15 and 31-33 of the specification and the associated figures. However, support for the claims as well as the current claim amendments is provided throughout the specification. No new matter has been added.

The pending claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. However, if the Examiner believes certain amendments are necessary to clarify the present claims or if the Examiner wishes to resolve other issues by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: March 23, 2004


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